

Child and Family Welfare Professionals of the Year 2006

Northern Region



Gwen Zabokrtsky

Salt Lake Region



Cody McBride

Western Region



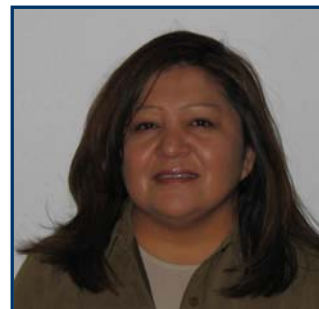
Abel Kanigan

Eastern Region



Tammy Ardohain

Southwest Region



Effie Graham

*~ Click on photo for caseworker information ~
See Photos and Information of the event Starting on Page 2*

Recognition Luncheon

November 17th, 2006

The Citizens' Board for the Division of Child and Family Services

recognized 5 outstanding caseworkers at a luncheon at the Little America Hotel on November 17th, 2006. The board vice chair, Cindy Ensign had this to say about Utah's Child Welfare system and the award recipients:

"Our great state of Utah has, by every measure, one of the best child and family services in the nation, and we feel it is because we have the best caseworkers in the world. As a board, we have come to understand what a tremendous service our professionals provide to our communities' most needy children and families. A caseworker's job is physically, mentally, and emotionally draining, and often dangerous. For their tireless devotion and noble dedication there is never enough thanks, but we, as a board would like to try by inaugurating our Annual Child Welfare Professionals of the Year Luncheon. We can only hope that this luncheon will become a Utah tradition, a way of honoring the professionals who serve the most needy among us."

The program consisted of remarks from Executive Director of Human Services, Lisa-Michele Church, Senator Dan Eastman, Chairmen of the Child Welfare Legislative Oversight Panel, Public Information Officer Carol Sisco and Director Richard Anderson. To read a copy of Richard Anderson's Remarks [Click Here](#).

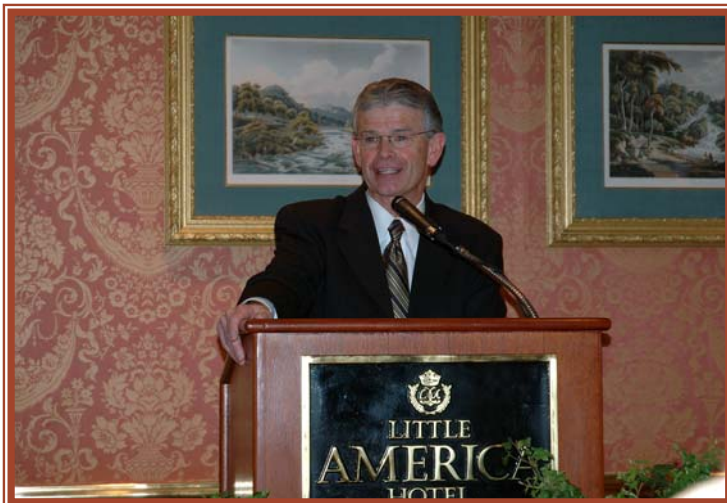
The Board was pleased to announce the naming of their award as the "Richard J. Anderson Professional Child Welfare Award", which came as a surprise to Richard!



From Left to Right: Executive Director Lisa-Michele Church, Richard Anderson, Cody McBride, Effie Graham, Tammy Ardohain, Gwen Zabokrtsky, Abel Kanigan



Lisa-Michele Church thanks and congratulates award recipients



Richard Anderson addresses the group. [Click here](#) for a copy of his remarks

The luncheon was well supported by many community leaders. Several government officials, including Senator Dan Eastman, Representative Steve Mascaró, and Representative Paul Ray, attended the event. The offices of, Congressman Jim Matheson, Congressman Chris Cannon, Senator Bob Bennett and Senator Hatch sent representatives to attend the event and acknowledge the good work of the caseworkers. Brad McGarry, Director of OSR and Ken Stettler, Director of Licensing were also present to show their appreciation.

A full-page ad was generously donated by the Deseret Morning News to highlight the event. The ad ran on page A9 of the November 27th, 2006 newspaper.

Many private groups were thanked for their support of this function, including Little & Grand Americas, Sinclair Oil Corporation, Utah



Board Chair (left) George Monsavias and Board Vice Chair, Cindy Ensign introduce the caseworkers from each region.

Foster Care Foundation, Deseret News, Zion's Bank, The Boyer Company, Eccles Foundation & The Utah Families Foundation.

Congratulations to Gwen, Cody, Abel, Effie and Tammy, our 5 caseworkers of the year!!



Senator Dan Eastman addresses the group



Board Vice Chair, Cindy Ensign, announces the name of the award as the "Richard I. Anderson: Professional Child Welfare Award"



Richard Anderson attends to a special guest, his granddaughter Halle Harding



Cathy Anderson and her granddaughter Halle.

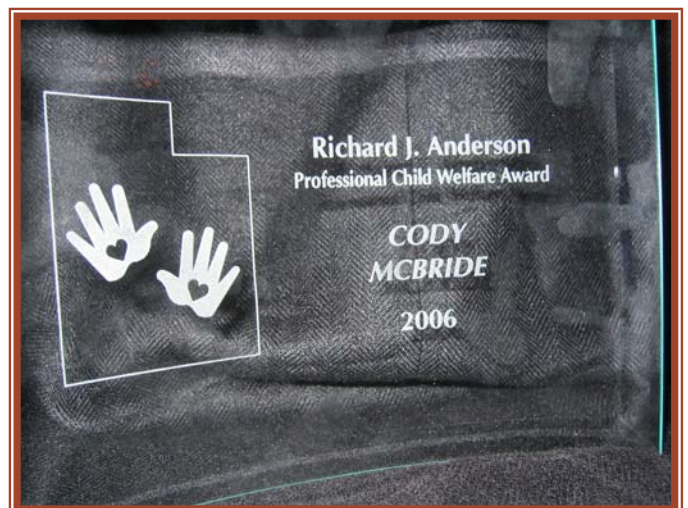
Richard Anderson's Remarks Caseworker Recognition November 17th, 2006

Here is what I know about you:

1. When families are ready to give up on themselves and their hopes to achieve meaningful family life you provide hope.
2. When children are fearful of the very place that was meant to give them the protection and love that all children need, you help turn it around so that they can have a safe harbor in this world.
3. When you are confronted with those that misunderstand your presence and misjudge your intentions you practice patience and persevere not for your own gain, but to help the very people that, at first and sometimes further into the services, malign you.
4. You have learned the lesson of a true healer because you can care for those that might spitefully use you.
5. You advocate for many who have already been judged and written off by friends, family and, at times, the entire public that knows about their failures.
6. You intervene and work in circumstances where others question your intrusion because they cannot believe that **this** family would have **those** problems.
7. You have gained the confidence of those that may have lost confidence that anyone could or would care about them and their family.

You are the best in a system that is one of the best in the nation – that says a great deal about you. You have qualified yourself through education and training. You have good intentions. Even, more you have produced results that are some of the most needed in our society – seeing to it that children have childhoods and families can succeed.

Now to you that became the loving partners of these five heroes, thanks to you for your support. (After 33 years Cathy can probably make this part of my comments better than I can). You watch as your loved one, even though taking a vacation or having a day off, still thinks about work. You have to listen to the times when they just have to unload on someone they really trust. You wonder why such a job does not pay more than sports stars. You worry about their safety, but yet you know that they are provided guardian angels because they are caring for the children. You also see that confidence and joy that comes from success in such meaningful ways that if the world only knew what your partner did they would publicize it every day in every newspaper and every television and radio station.



Gwen Zabokrtsky

Northern Region



Edited by Carol Sisco

"Working with children and families on a day-to-day basis is what I like best about being a caseworker," said Gwen Zabokrtsky. "I have been able to get to know some outstanding people whom I know will continue to keep their children safe. I've had the opportunity to go into families' homes and share their successes and challenges."

Gwen is assigned to work with families who've abused or neglected their children while using drugs. All participate in the Weber County Drug Court as they work to control their addictions. "Gwen takes on difficult cases without hesitation," said DCFS Northern

Region Director Carol Baumann. "She is someone everyone looks to and trusts. She always sees the positive in clients and makes every effort to help them see the positive in themselves."

"I'm grateful to work with families in our community who are ready to make a change," Gwen said. "I am also grateful to work with coworkers who are caring, hard workers and dedicated to child welfare."



*Gwen receives her award at the luncheon (above)
Region Director Carol Baumann gives Gwen her invitation (below)*



The five-year-employee diligently visits with children on her caseload and talks frequently with foster parents and other providers, Baumann said. She also serves as a mentor to other caseworkers. "Gwen has a style all her own in that she engages with families who are often angry and upset and helps them feel important," Baumann said. "She has clients she worked with years ago who still come and see her monthly just to touch base."

Cody McBride

Salt Lake Valley Region



Edited by Carol Sisco

Cody McBride became a foster care worker last year after being a foster parent.

"I decided to become a caseworker because of my experience as a foster parent," he said. "I continue to do it because I get to be a part of someone who is making internal changes. I get to help people understand what they are capable of and motivate them for positive change."

"Cody has a kind and compassionate heart and always considers the long-term effect of his actions," DCFS Salt Lake Region Director LaRay Brown said. "He approaches every aspect of his life with complete dedication. He believes in the goodness of people which aids in supporting those who need to believe in themselves."



Richard Anderson congratulates Cody McBride

Cody devotes himself to focusing on the children he works with, Brown added. He exemplifies an attitude of commitment and dedication to his job.

"When a case is in crisis, he responds immediately whether the child is in Salt Lake or the Uintah Basin," Brown said. "His clients connect with him and feel his support."

Cody also understands the guidelines of his profession and follows them in an exemplary manner, she said.

"In one short year of employment, he has become a mentor to others and demonstrates a willingness to support his clients and his administration as he works with them to meet the needs of children and families," Brown added.

Abel Kanigan

Western Region



Edited by Carol Sisco

Abel Kanigan investigates allegations of child abuse and neglect in American Fork. He works closely with families to decide if children can safely remain home, determines what services they need and removes them if he can't ensure their safety.

"Abel has shown over and over again that even when the work and workload become difficult, a truly focused person can achieve remarkable outcomes," DCFS Western Region Director Brent Platt said.

"Abel is bright, energetic, well-rounded and genuinely compassionate," added his supervisor Bill Duncan. "He is always anxious to participate in various groups and activities outside of his regular casework responsibilities and has individually trained and mentored at least 10 new employees."

Duncan learned firsthand about the qualities that make Abel such a good caseworker when he accompanied him on an investigation involving a father who allegedly forced his child's arm into a hot oven.

"Tension was high as we went in and all parties were on edge," Duncan said. "Abel skillfully managed the family's fears, apprehension and anger." He explained DCFS policies and what would be happening next in a respectful and compassionate way while still assertively addressing the specific concerns.

Abel consistently receives exceptional evaluations from his bosses as he completes cases thoroughly and on time and always focuses on the family's needs, Platt said



Richard Anderson congratulates Abel Kanigan

Effie Graham

Southwest Region

Edited by Carol Sisco



Effie Graham's passion for helping underprivileged and oppressed people turned her into a caseworker more than two years ago.

"I continue to work with children and their families because I have observed many children and their families overcome their biggest challenges and barriers to maintain or make further progress in their lives," she said. "I enjoy being part of the family's changing process."

Effie works with children and families in their homes and also helps children in foster care in the Richfield area. A Navajo, she "effectively utilizes the many strengths of her culture and graduate-level social work education to help families in crisis and children who have been abused or neglected," DCFS Southwest Director Todd Minchey said.

"One of my best experiences happened with one of the families who gave me a greeting card when I finished the case," she recalled. "They expressed their gratitude and appreciation for helping them. Each child and parent signed their name and at the bottom it said 'with love.'"

The family wept with mixed emotions of happiness and sadness as Effie left their lives.

"On my drive home I thought about how I'd been part of their struggles and changes," she said. "It was a great feeling to be part of a positive change."



Effie Graham receives her award at the Nov. 17th Recognition Luncheon

Effie has garnered respect from other agencies that help children in crisis including the juvenile courts, guardian ad litem, assistant attorneys' general and mental health staff.

"Effie Graham is a model caseworker whose determination to provide the best possible services to children and families has earned her praise, respect from her peers and community and the honor of being named Southwest Region's 2006 Child Welfare Professional of the Year," Minchey said.

Tammy Ardohain

Eastern Region



Edited by Carol Sisco

Foster parents in Carbon and Emery counties like working with Tammy Ardohain. Why? She listens, helps them and cares for their children. Many families continue to visit her in her Price office many years after their cases close.

"A caseworker must be skilled at engaging people in order to be successful," said DCFS Eastern Region Director Paul Smith. "Engaging requires genuineness, empathy and respect. Tammy has all three."

Tammy is a listener, believing that is the most important quality a caseworker can have. She's worked with foster children for nine years, starting as an intern while earning a degree in psychology and moving to a permanent job after "realizing I enjoyed working with foster children as well as foster parents."

"My best experience as a caseworker has been being able to maintain the positive relationships and contact with foster families and children even after the case has closed or the child has been released from care," she said. "I really enjoy working with the teenagers and helping them become successful."

Tammy works well with parents who've abused their children because she doesn't judge them, Smith said.

"Building a positive relationship with the family can help them become successful," Tammy added. "I don't have all the answers."



Board Chair George Monsoviás congratulates Tammy Ardohain

But Tammy provides support and direction for the family so that they can address difficult issues. She gathers the family, people they trust and child welfare professionals together to help each family solve their own problems.

"Eastern Region is proud to have Tammy as a member of its child welfare team," Smith said.